

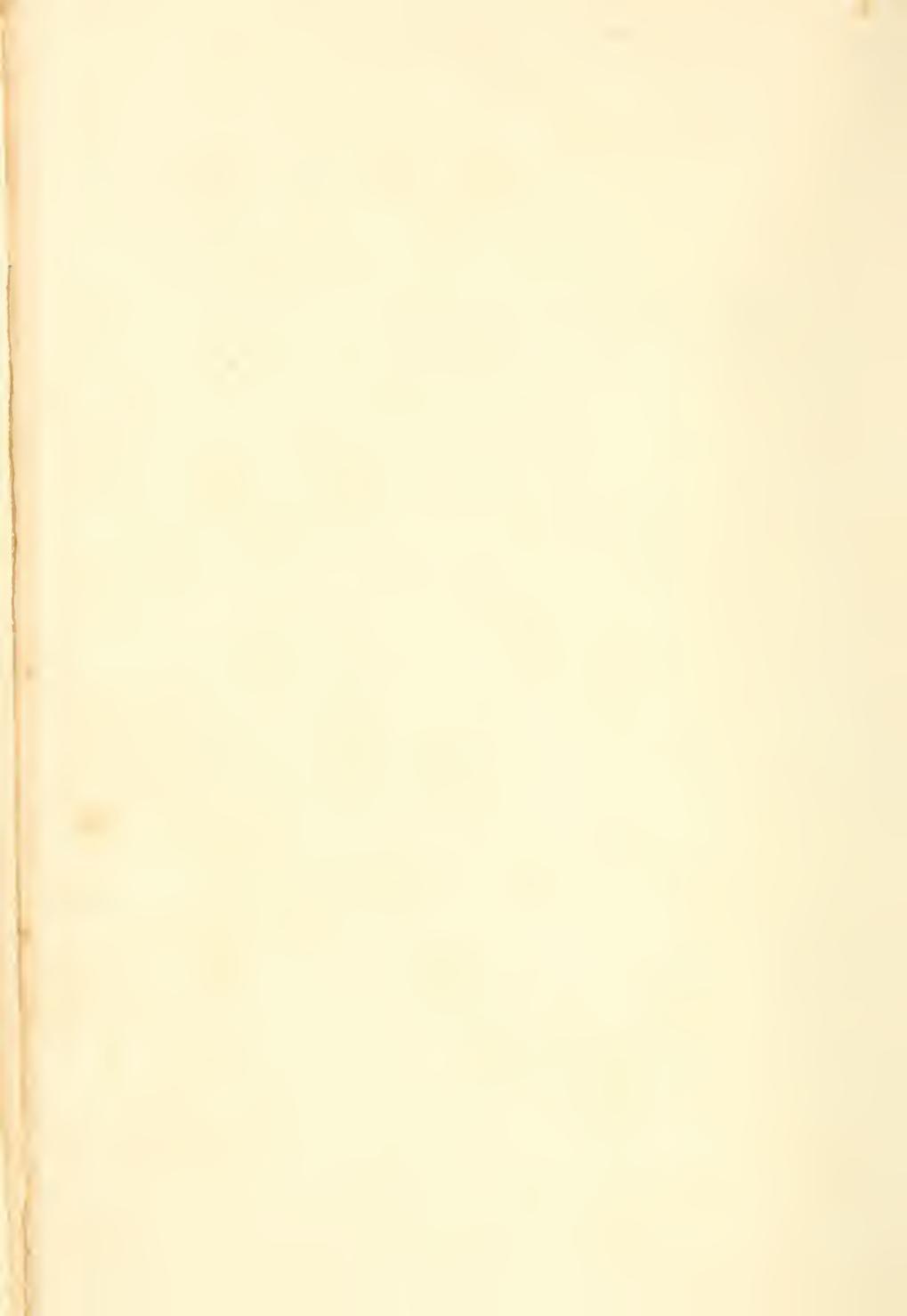


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The Collected Poems of
T. W. H. Crosland





The Collected Poems of T. W. H. Crosland

'Donde una puerta se cierra, otra se abre'

CERVANTES

London
Martin Secker
Number Five John Street
Adelphi

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*The portrait which forms the frontispiece to
this volume is from a photograph
by E. O. Hoppé*

Note

The pieces hereby assembled represent a period of production ranging over a quarter of a century. A number of those referring to the war are reprinted from ‘War Poems by X’ (Martin Secker, 1916). Others are now published for the first time. Lest the title ‘Collected Poems’ be taken in its post-mortem association, the author desires respectfully to say that he is still alive.

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POEMS

A



Woman

Four pomegranates grow for me,
On my true love's silver tree.

One I have tasted, and my mouth
Is filled with fragrance of the South ;

One, which burns with holy red,
He shall give me when we wed ;

The third from its branch shall be torn
When our little son is born ;

The fourth, which is most delicate,
Kinder than Love, sharper than Fate,

Fairer than fruit of Samarkand,
You shall put in my dead hand.

Swan Song

Who makes an Eden must set you in it,
And who hath stars of crystal brimmed and bright,
Planets of rose,
Or moons of amber lit
From lordly lending suns of chrysolite,
And beautiful as those
That ache to furious Saturn.
For you are silver dawns
And silver rain
And silver snows :
And the prodigious night
Of balms and dews and darknesses and dreams
And trancèd forests and enchanted streams,
And unimaginable lawns,
And unlatched lattices
(Enlamped and tinkling)
Suddenly shut-to,
And snaring silences :
Eternally for you
The age-young seas are blue
And the great peaks rose-white.

The nightingale
Which doth the world assail
Athrob with old immitigable pain
And music past her wit,
And ambushed in the cedars, spilleth no note
Or fret or flurry or strain
Or magical sweet pattern
That is not yours ;
Neither shall she, the minstrel, who doth sit
Poisèd in extreme height
And propped by April azures,
So to fling
The noise of her aspiring
At angel feet
And on immortal floors.

You know the men and women who are dead
Each by his name and each by her dim name,
And you do count them as you count spent roses
From the first down
And till the last one closes :
Time-which-hath-been, and cannot be, hath spread
Beside the river of Time-which-is, a town
Of echoless dwelling-places where inhabit
Shadows that shine or bleed
And creep and climb and falter and are sped,
And are yet shadows, and shall never know
More than they knew,
And never more may say
More than they said,

And yours is their imperishable joy
And yours their woe,
And on your head
Fall ruth and rapture :
You are both quick and dead,
While they,
Whom luring life never again shall capture,
Are only dead.

There was a maid who had just heard of love,
And an old man who had forgotten lust,
A barren wife whose heart was motherhood,
A wanton who could think on naught but good ;
A thief who still
Had honour, and a liar
To whom his lie
Was whip and fire
And an abhor'd
And grievous uttering :
I heard a bride say in the night
The world is builded on delight,
I saw the murderer adore a sky
Of summer and without fleck
What time the hangman grabbled at his neck :
They told me of a princess who had thrown
From her sweet state, hot kisses to the dust,
And of a peacock lord
Who darkly understood
He was a clown,
And of a clown who surely was a king

But minded apes.
All loveliness, all ill,
All innocence, all ruin and all dread,
All glory and all disgrace
Lifted themselves like ghosts,
In infinite multitude,
Innumerable hosts ;
And all these shapes
Were yours,
And they had looks like flowers
And manifold soft graces,
And ever in their faces
I could trace,
Somewhere, your face.

O secret, consecrate
Inviolable spirit, elate
And amorous and proud
With blanchèd plumes that shroud
And glitteringly conceal
The flame, and the vermeil
And whiteness not for sight,
Who to this garden of tears
And the enthronèd spheres
Art essence and breath and light ;
Who blessest for the blest
And for the lowliest,
And standest on heaven's rim
Out-staturing seraphim,
And sittest by poor men's fires

And givest to the wicked their desires,
And whom to gaze upon
That which is done is done
For ever, and shall be
Unto eternity ;
In the translated clay
Bathed out of Paphia,
In love and laughter and might
And the seven souls of right
And seventy souls of wrong,
In birth and sorrow and song
And terror and despair,
And all things fine and fair
Whether of gold or green,
The wonder have I seen,
The immanence flashing by,
And, slain with it, I die !

The Weeping

Through height on height
Of the far Heaven,
Which is a firmament
And infinite air
And bosom of light,
Great seraphs swept
On joyful errands bent ;
And in the seven
Sweet spaces
Where blessedness doth begin,
The cherubin
Holily strayed,
And shined and slept,
And shined again.

And none that were
Engardened of those bright places
Sorrowed or wept
Or knew the use of tears.
It had been so a million, million years :
And then,—
The world was made.

Payments

I

“ I will come to you
Across white dawns,
In the night of stars,
In the morning blue.

“ Like a shining dove
Alone in heaven,
In your sweet place
I shall see you move.” . . .

O Heart, it befell,
When I came, when I came,
You laughed ghost-white
In the lamps of hell.

II

Fairer than the fair
And than young moons,
Thus to be lodged
With sharp despair.

O innocent,
Unblemish'd and without spot
And so without defence ;
For you the punishment.

For you the rod
And the impitying stroke,
You loveliness,
You city of God !

II

III

You had no tears
Women may weep,
Nor silver easing sigh
Nor fortifying fears,

No trepidance :
Only the dumb amaze
Of undeceivèdness
Chanced upon all mischance ;

Nor agonies
Nor sorrow unto death,
That you should fall on your face
In seven Gethsemanes.

IV

Your punctual candle lit,
Your bowl kept bright,
Your thoughts as still
As the lily in it.

A curtain of blue,
A bed of cypress wood
And ivory,
And one great star for you.

And cloths of fair
White, and cups of gold—
And in your heart the knife
And winter in your hair.

V

How should you pray
Or call to the saints,
Who had small need of prayer
Even as they ?

How should you guess
That over you would fail
The pinion shadowless
Even for a minute's space ?

How could the air
Forget its kindnesses,
And the earth its love
And your angel his care ?

VI

There was a foul
And livid, living thing
That wept and died,
Having no soul.

The lips of it
Scarlet with lies
And impudent with leers,
And on its forehead writ

Evil and bale ;
And it hath fellowship
Malefic as itself,
But clad in cunnerger mail.

VII

For ever, walls of fire
And chasms of swords
'Twixt your green country
And the world's mire.

It were a sin
That echo or breath
Should reach to your tower
From tents they riot in.

Yet their desert
Lifts them, and deviously
From these and thence
Cometh the hurt.

VIII

Into your book,
Jewelled with flame
And clamped with honour,
Who shall look ?

Borders of woe,
Letters of blood,
Upon a page
Of milk and snow.

This justice for the just
Thereby you read—
Asbes to asbes
Dust to dust.

A Song of Death

I

Smile, O master of life,
Safe in thy silver house,
Be pleased with thy pleasant wife—
Soon thou hast woe for spouse.

Joy and joy are thy choice—
(Shrewd art thou past a doubt !)
Take they joy and rejoice—
Sorrow shall find thee out.

Laugh thou loud at the fool
Munching his bitter bread ;—
Surely as thou dost rule
One shall rule in thy stead.

What though thy heart be flame,
And perfume all thy breath ?—
Who hath written thy name
Here in the book of Death ?

Yea, though thou shine rose-white
Or though thou burn rose-red,
Upon the lawful night
Thou shalt lie spent and sped.

Drink that is soft and sound !
Meats for the delicate maw !—
Already the beldame is found
Who shall tape-up that jaw.

Build through the golden day
Cunning in every stroke—
ADZE from his bench must say,
“ Shall it be elm or oak ? ”

And though thou hast all grace,
All wisdom, and all wit,
MATTOCK, in the right place,
Will delve the appointed pit.

With faith thou art rich ; and firm
In hopes like the young east—
Let us promise the worm
His certain year-long feast !

II

Fool that no man calls master,
Irredeemable slave,
Born for the stark disaster
With nothing to hope or have.

Inasmuch as thou moilest
For sour and scanty bread,
Rejoice, for wherever thou toilst
One shall toil in thy stead.

And inasmuch as they gall thee
And bitterness is thy breath,
On a day they shall call thee
Forth to thy lawful death.

Let it not be forgotten,
This is the sure reward—
Thou shalt lie dead and rotten,
Even as dead as thy lord.

So with the brand or the feather
Each hath his tally and term—
Let us sup nobly together,
“Here’s to the ultimate worm !”

III

Lo, there is anguish and wailing
Out of the world and her wars,
A cry goeth up unavailing
Unto the steadfast stars.

Set on sweet thrones they glister
Over our pain and ruth,
Each to her shining sister
Telling the wordless truth.

Though we be fools or sages,
Whò is it conquereth ?
Death shall pay this world's wages ;
All that he pays is death.

By the prayers ye have faltered,
By the blood and the tears,
Which is the law ye have altered
In all the faithful years ?

No new sign hath been given,
No new tale is to tell—
And still the earth is heaven,
And still the souls are hell.

Death for life is the guerdon,
“ Life for death ” is the ban ;
None might carry the burden,
Only the sons of man.

Of whom there is no daunting
Beneath the pitiless sky,
For whom the final vaunting
Is “ men can only die.”

Cursèd be he that setteth
Snares for the bleeding feet ;
Cursèd be he that getteth,
And giveth not, good wheat.

Cursèd be he that showeth,
Unto the simple, lies ;
Cursèd be he that throweth
Dust in the star-set eyes.

The Ballad of Poor Honesty

“ Now Good,” quoth he,
“ Be good for me,
And Evil be thou evil ” :
 O simple wight !—
 As well he might
Have leagued him with the Devil—
 Who, when all’s said,
 Is a gentleman bred,
And civil to the civil.

He trudgeth forth,
Now south now north,
To turn the needful penny,
 Upon his back
 He bears a pack
Through suns and snows a-many
 And mile on mile—
 With an equal smile
For Richard and for Jenny.

“ Yea these,” he sware,
“ Be God’s own pair,
They will not cog or cozen,
In smocks they go
To milk and mow,
And threadbare are their hosen ;
But if your due
Be twelve, for you
They’ll count out the full dozen.”

Yet Dick, fell wretch,
Did the hangman stretch,
For cutting a babe’s weasand,
And by the Bench
That brazen wench,
Young Jenny, was imprisoned,
That folk might cry,
“ In villainy
The twain were properly seasoned.”

“ Still Good,” quoth he,
“ Be good for me,
And Evil be thou evil ;
My grandam dear,
Above her beer,
Was wont to curse the Devil,
‘ O little lad,
Eschew the bad
Which doth defile ! ’ she’d snivel.”

Upon an ass
He is fain to pass
Into the virtuous city,
And soon doth stop
With my lord bishop,
The learnèd and the witty :
(“ So honest a face ! ”
Mused his lordship’s grace—
And hired him out of pity.)

Here every saw
Of the moral law
With joy he heard repeated,
Till on a night
In the candle-light
The bishop’s guests were seated,
And they played a game,
Bezique by name,
And my lord the bishop cheated.

So, nothing loth,
Our friend shogged off
To service with a person
Whom fools did rate
For a prop of the State :
There couldn’t have been a worse ’un ;
For by wink or grin
He approved the sin
We are bidden to put a curse on.

Then a judge he served
Who quite unnerved
This saint by actions foxy,
Such as bringing home quills
From the Office of Wills
And going to church by proxy,
And, once a week,
Pinching the cheek
Of a most offensive doxy.

“ Still Good for me
Be good,” quoth he,
“ And Evil be thou evil ;
I will show my mind
Unto mankind,
And speak them fair and civil,
And tell them how
All men I know
Are bondmen of the Devil.”

He trudgeth forth
Both south and north
By markets and street corners,
And saith aloud
To the wondering crowd,
“ Ye are plagued with thieves and scorners
And liars and cheats
And hypocrites
And losels and suborners ! ”

He was the first
That ever burst
Upon them with such tidings ;
Eftsoons they cried,
“ This fellow’s pride
Is surely past abiding ! ”
And with grievous stones,
They bruised his bones,
And hurried him into hiding.

Upon the floor
He lies full sore,
Nor murmureth unduly,
Although he must
Give up the ghost
His speech is not unruly ;
With his last breath
He uttereth
These words : “ I ha’ spoken truly ! ”

So passeth he
Most miserably,
Without or sniff or snivel :
Unhappy wight—
As well he might
Have leagued him with the Devil,
Who on the whole
Is a decent soul,
And returneth good for evil !

Faitan

They have fetch'd for the king,
To his city of might,
The singers who sing
In the dusks of delight
And the noons of the night.

Where the women are lain
They have order'd his rest,
With the blood of the slain
On his sword and his crest,
And his hands on his breast.

SONNETS

April 23

How shall we praise thee, who art England's praise
And with the soul of her soul most accords,
So that she vaunteth to the end of days
England and Shakespeare high, fast-wedded words ?
O Royal thou, that spake us a new earth
And new fair heavens, and a proud new sea,
Greener is April, boasting of thy birth,
More blossom'd May, because she swaddled thee !
Before thy wisdom humbly stand the wise,
Judged of thy goodness, Virtue hath no cause,
Whoever mounts, a feeble feather tries
By thy great pinion ; and except thou pause,
The sweetest singer falters in his scale—
Eagle, and Lark, and Swan, and Nightingale !

For Remembrance

What wife had he, what sweetheart, what fair love ?
So will the gossips ask themselves when Fame
Shall set her impudent lips upon my name
And make an auction for your cast-off glove.
They know you not. You are a brooding dove,
Whose spirit, fearful of the world's sharp flame,
Nestles unto the goodness whence it came,
And hath nor wish to range nor will to rove.

Yet, that through dusty Time you may not pass
Unpictured, unenshrined, or unadored,
I build this turret of eternal brass,
Wherein, so long as word may chime with word,
You are to sit before your jewelled glass
Beautiful as the Garden of the Lord.

For Algernon Charles Swinburne

The cherry whitens in the April air,
Young Spring has spilt her magic on the wold,
The woodlands ring with rapture as of old,
And England lies new-washen, green and fair ;
Yet is she heavy with a secret care,
For Death the ever-sharp and over-bold
Hath taken our Tongue of Honey, our Throat of Gold ;
And we have digged a pit, and left him there.

So must he sleep, though it be high broad noon,
Or Venus glister in the darkling firs :
The roses and the music are forgot ;
Even the great round marigold of a moon,
That is for lovers and for harvesters,
And all the sighing seas, may move him not.

For Stephen Phillips

Now you are dead and past the bitter fret
And the long doubt and the disputed throne,
And the contempts which turn the heart to stone,—
Who that hath wit shall breathe you a regret ?
Who that hath tears shall pay you pity's debt ?
Unto your place of easing you are gone,
Having fetched for us Beauty from her own
Lodges of gold by silver orchards set.

O mortal man that looked in angels' eyes
And still of baseness took both rood and reed,
Griever who wed bright visions to great sounds,
Teller of sorrowful proud histories ;
We put our silly fingers in your wounds
And it is well that they no longer bleed.

Ubi Bene

Along the English lanes a budding green,
Upon the English orchards pink and white,
And over them the rapture and delight
Of April sunshine ! Fair and fresh and clean,
Washen as if in wells of hyaline
And very wondrous to the pilgrim sight ;
A glad, new land of all things soft and bright—
Oh, surely, here an angel must have been

And left his blessing ! . . . Dead, young son of ours,
Who didst so proudly taste the loving-cup,
Whose blood but now shone like a living rose
Dropped by the Lord upon the Flanders snows,
What country shall they give you to be yours
For this, the England you have given up ?

The Baby in the Ward

We were all sore and broken and keen on sleep,
Tumours and hearts and dropsies, there we lay,
Weary of night and wearier of day,
With no more health in us than rotten sheep.
Then, tossed to us on some intangible deep,
Alicia came, and each man learnt to pray
That Providence would please find out a way
To still or abate the voice with which she would weep.

God's infinite mercy, how that child did cry,
In spite of bottle, bauble, peppermint, nurse !
The Tumour said he'd " tell the manager,"
The Dropsy mumbled forth his bitterest curse ;
But still she wailed and wailed. And when we die
We shall be sainted for forgiving her.

Titanic

Upon the tinkling splintery battlements
Which swing and tumble south in ghostly white
Behemoth rushes blindly from the night,
Behemoth whom we have praised on instruments
Dulcet and shrill and impudent with vents :
Behemoth whose huge body was our delight
And miracle, wallows where there is no light,
Shattered and crumpled and torn with pitiful rents.

O towers of steel and masts that gored the moon,
On you we blazoned our pomp and lust and pelf,
And we have died like excellent proud kings
Who take death nobly if it come late or soon :
For our high souls are mirrors of Himself,
Though our great wonders are His littlest things.

Valour

Mounting his stairs of azure and of gold,
The English lark sings in the August weather
For joy which knoweth neither tie nor tether
And is not troubled if the world grows old ;
While you, who were as blithesome and as bold,
And held your life lightly as any feather,
Sleep the high sleep that dead men sleep together,
Careless of what is done and what is told.

I know that all our England shone before you
When you went down. It made a radiance
Even of the front of Death. Oh, woman's son,
You died for England . . . valiant as she that bore you,
And sent you forth with a still countenance,
And broke her heart for England—and lives on !

Lovers

He goeth and he returns not. He is dead ;
Their house of joy no further brightness shows,
Their loveliness is come unto its close,
Their last touch given, and their last kindness said ;
For him no more the vision of her bent head,
For her no more the lily or the rose,
Nor any gladness in this place of woes ;
The book is shut, the bitter lesson read.

Yet who shall beat them down ? Though the Abhor'd
Taketh the groom, and to the bride hath sent
The dagger of anguish with the ice-cold hilt,
Both of them triumph in a strange content—
And out of souls like these will heavens be built
And holy cities peopled for the Lord.

On the Death of Edward VII

All our proud banners mourn along the May,
One who is plumed and powerful breaks us down :
Marred are the orchards, shaken our strong town,
And blackness covers up our bright array.
The Sceptre and the Orb are put away ;
The scarlet changed for the funeral gown ;
And easy lies the head that wore a Crown,
And this which was a King is simple clay.

O mighty Death, the mightiest are thine,
Thou set'st his Widow weeping in her place,
And while thou pluck'st her heart with thy chill hand,
And givest her to drink a common wine,
The wondering sentry goeth at his pace,
And England cries, and cannot understand.

The Promise

You know my pains, you see me in the hell
Through which I toil, hurt and uncomforted,
You see on what base errands I am sped,
And what I reap where we sowed asphodel ;
And my songs are of sorrow, and I tell,
Knowing no other, tales of grief and dread :
Though I be warm I am as good as dead,
And always we can hear my passing bell.

And yet, dear Spirit, you who have kind eyes
That meet disaster with a child's amaze,
You who have got a wild rose for your lips
And are all fashioned out of Paradise ;
You shall stand safe beside the sapphire bays,
And I will show you all our golden ships.

Ulster

The savage leopardess, and she-wolves and bears
Cherish their offsprings in the solitude,
And red-eyed tigresses whose trade is blood,
And female panthers, and jackals in their lairs.
The lowliest, sullenest mother-creature wears
In her hot heart a jewel of motherhood,
And knoweth darkly that the only good
Is to defend and succour her rude heirs.

And thou whose Might is from the east unto the west,
Whose Front is of chilled iron and fine gold,
Who yet in glory and honour goest drest,
O great-thewed mother of us all, behold
How this thy sturdy child, who is foully sold,
Fights that he be not banished from thy breast !

Charing Cross

At five o'clock they ring a tinkly bell ;
The April dawn glimmers along the beds,
There is a lifting up of weary heads
From weary pillows. Our old citadel
Hath still held out, and while the miracle
Of morning is unbared again, and spreads
All the young East with greens and blues and reds
Each of us wakes to his particular hell.

But even on this bitter shore of Styx
Where Life to dogged Death puts the last schism,
We kindle for the ending of the dark :
The Asthma feebly jokes the Aneurism,
The little bandaged boy in Number Six
Sings " Ye shall die " with a voice like a lark.

For H. M. C.

I wonder which hath triumphed, you or Death ?
For he has torn you ultimately from your place,
And shattered all the woman in your face,
And put his last injunction on your breath,
And ferried you across to his dim staith
Where there is none who hath either hope or grace,
But only the unimaginable race
Of broken souls his wing encompasseth.

O pitiful and pitiful ! And yet
Not all he asks is yielded up to him,
And we who fight have our shrewd joy therefor :
Upon your brow sitteth a shining, grim
Rapture of wars, and on your lips is set
To-night the still smile of the conqueror.

After

And when I die, you should be grieved, and go
Dumbly into the bitter fields alone,
For you have long since made your widow's moan,
And carried in your heart the widow's woe.
Outrageous Death hath neither feint nor blow
To hurt you further. Thus without a groan
I shall go down, and be as cold as stone,
And you will kiss me and I shall not know.

But haply then some mercy may befall,
And to your breast, this death in life being past,
Quiet may come and peace without alloy :
Seeing you lone and lovely and downcast
They will possess you with a secret joy
And keep you with an angel at your call.

Dawn

“This morning at dawn I attacked the enemy’s second system of defence.”—SIR DOUGLAS HAIG

These are the fights of Love and Joy and Men
With Fate and Death and the illicit Beast,
For guerdons, of which Glory is the least
And Honour not the highest. The old reign
Of Night shall topple, the old Wrongs be slain :
Fitting it is that you go to the Feast
While angel suns kindle the young-eyed east
And bring the breath of Eden back again.

Oh soldiers’ hour ! . . . For now the English rose
Flames and is washed with the authentic dew
And through the mist her ancient crimson shows :
I see your shadows on the waking lawn
Like shadows of kings, and all the souls of you
Blazoned and bright and panoplied in the dawn.

Cor Cordium

He is gone hence. Weep no weak tears for him :
You gave us freely what you valued most ;
It is not loss, for gifts are never lost
Unto the giver. Lo, the star-kept, dim
Limits where battle fades away, and grim
Death halts and hath no power ! On that coast
His feet are set among the shining host
Who range with cherubim and seraphim.

A thousand suns are unregarded dust,
A million dawns break and are counted not,
And Beauty riseth up, and she departs
Eternally—eternally forgot ;
But your fair stripling, dead beside his trust,
Is safely folded in the Heart of Hearts.

“Votes for Women”

Mark how their shining effigies are set
For ever on the firmament of Time,
Like lovely words caught in a lovely rhyme,
Or silver stars kept in a faery net.
Ivory and marble hold them for us yet,
And all our blossomy memories of them chime
With all the honest graces of the prime—
Helen, and Ruth, Elaine, and Juliet.

And You, in this disconsolate London square
Flaunting an ill-considered purple hat
And mud-stained, rumpled, bargain-counter coat,
You of the broken tooth and buttered hair,
And idiot eye and cheeks that bulge with fat,
Sprawl on the flagstones chalking for a vote !

*For a Rich Man who is said to
“ Believe in Poetry ”*

Let us be filled with wild and fierce disdains,
Let us contemn, disparage, and cry down
These prancing stomachs who amass and own,
Inherit and squander, and have nets and chains
And panoplies of penalties and pains
Wherewith to extort the uttermost half-crown ;
For whom indeed the world's hard fields are sown
And its scant harvests gathered on gorged wains.

Withal, we must believe good things of them,
And show a kindly bosom while they stand
Grinning out of their proud and cunning eyes ;
Nay, even the chiefest shall not stir our phlegm,
For he hath still knowledge of Paradise,
And hides an angel's feather in his hand.

Leda

Out of my silver turrets I look down
Upon a garden wherein sleeps a rose
Who hath a ruby heart ; beside her glows
Unblemished, in a drifted, vestal gown
Yon lily, and beyond them lies a town
Of tufted green and each sweet bloom that blows ;
Midmost from whence a little fountain throws
His gentle sprays which seem but half his own.

And on the lake that skirts our dreary wood
There sails for ever a new-washen swan,
Who is as white as milk or angels are :
At dawn he glitters in the solitude,
At dusk he goeth glimmering and wan
To where one waits him, white like a young star.

The “Student”

A minx of seventeen, with rather fine
Brown eyes and freckles and a cheerful grin,
She saunters up the ward, and stricken sin
Nods and looks pleasant (why should one repine ?).
She takes “her cases,” looks for every “sign,”
Hammers and sounds the portly and the thin,
Plies them with questions till their cheap heads spin
And keeps them busy saying “ninety-nine.”

It’s my turn now ! Oh, let me bare my chest
And spread a level sheet across my crib,
And be as wax for our meticulous Miss ;
While she, poor dear, doing her anxious best,
Feels for the apex under the wrong rib
And wonders fiercely where my liver is.

Antarctic

What tale is this which stirs a world of knaves
Out of its grubbing to throw greasy pence
Forth to the hat, and choke with eloquence
In boastful prose and verse of doubtful staves ?
Four men have died, gentlemen, heroes, braves ;
Snows wrap them round eternally. From thence
They may no more return to life or sense
And a steel moon aches down on their chill graves.

“ They died for England.” It is excellent
To die for England. Death is oft the prize
Of him who bears the burden and the load.
So with a glory let our lives be spent—
We may be noble in the Minories
And die for England in the Camden Road.

Shepherd's Bush

Preposterous stucco, naughty ropes of light,
The drunken drone of twenty-two brass bands,
A flip-flap, and some hokey-pokey stands ;
Smith on your left, and Lipton on your right,
And Lyons, Lyons, Lyons ; and that bright
Particular marvel, which, be sure, commands
Respect from fools of all and sundry brands—
The Press Lord Harmsworth prints from every night.

Here, noble London, dost thou prowl and yell,
Or cause to disappear with horrid zest
The meat and drink provided by the Jew ;
Here flickereth they paltry, shadowful hell—
And like a silver feather in the West,
And fair as fair, the moon that Dido knew !

Death

For thou wert Master of their windy keeps,
In Tyre, in Ilium, and in Babylon,
Which smote the welkin many a year agone
With torches and with shouting. Whoso sleeps
On the large hills, or drowns in the old deeps,
His name shines in a book for thee to con ;
And thy chill pomps and aching triumphs are won
Where the forlornest woman sits and weeps.

So that for thee we make embroideries,
And for thy foul pate twist a beamy crown,
Who art the lord of laughter and of lust,
Who readest all their lesson to the wise,
And to the fools, as they go up and down ;
And it is this : A cry, a dream, and—dust.

The End

I know that our fair rose was slain last night :
She is become a ruinous, delicate wraith,
And now she gives her perfumes up to Death ;
No longer may she shine in the sweet light,
Or drink the dewey darkness ; for the might
That breaks the hearts of kings and staggereth
Bold men, hath borne her down. "Take me," she saith,
"Unto the old, dead roses, red and white."

So, dearest, when the ultimate foul dun
And crawling knave into our hand shall thrust
His figure of accompt and greedy fine
For our poor gladness underneath the sun,
I shall come laughing to your gentle dust,
Or you will come like balm to comfort mine.

For the Time

Give me the robe an angel late hath worn,
Give me the tongue of wonder and the pen
Of magic which doth fetch the souls of men
Out of deep hell ; give me the stings of scorn,
The rage of blood, agony of the thorn,
Wisdom of hills and stars. Let me be ten
Times tried in furnaces, and tried again,
And searched in icy wells where proof is born.

And I will say to you a word of breath
More furious than the forty winds of night
And fiercer and more terrible than death ;
And yet as holy as the words of light
That love or mercy or sainthood uttereth,
And sweeter than the prayers of women—FIGHT !

RED ROSE

‘Pόδα μ’ εἰρηκας

Red Rose

*Red Rose importuneth the Lover,
and he answereth her*

The red rose called to me,
“ Be thou my Love ;
Lo, I am fire and flame
For love of thee.”

I said to the red rose,
“ It is in starry white,
With brows and breasts of snow,
That my Love goes.”

*She continueth to
invite him and
praiseth herself*

“ Come to me, come to me,
I shall be excellence,
Softness and bloom and myrrh
And heavy sleep,” saith she.

“ And I have doves, as of old,
My lips are crimson joy,
And my smiles are of light,
And my tears are of gold.”

*She calleth him of
her lovers, and bid-
deth him be the chief
of them*

“ Three Kings rage at my door,
They would have love of me,
Till I look forth on them,
They are mean men and poor.

“ In purple they go drest,
And bright gifts each King bears,
Come thou and be with us,
And I will love thee best.”

*She describeth her
chamber and the
pleasures thereof*

“ There is a chamber lies
In the heart of my house,
Secret and sweet and dim,
Lit only with mine eyes.

“ We will burn spices there,
And we will say to Life,
‘ Bring now for our delight
All that is good and fair.’ ”

*The Lover telleth
her of the chamber
of his own Love*

I said, “ No Kings may wait
Against my white Love’s door,
She hath no Love save one,
She needeth not such state.

“ Her chamber is of blue,
A gold lamp shines therein ;
A lily and a babe
Are in her chamber too.”

*The Lover falleth
captive to her beauty*

Red rose, red rose,
Oh, thou red rose !
I went into her house
Upon the slow day's close,

I lay down on her bed,
She smiled her smile of light,
She wept her tears of gold :
“ Oh, thou red rose ! ” I said.

*He parleyeth with
her*

“ Red rose, red rose,
Red rose and rose of mine,
Behold we are one soul,
With love for its repose.”

She laughed, like one who sings,
Saying, “ We are one soul.”
She thought of my white Love,
And I of those three Kings.

They sleep

She thought of those three Kings,
And I of my white Love :
A cold moon look'd at us,
Chill from a thousand springs.

I said, “ But we are one.”
She said, “ Yea, we are one.”
We slept a lover's sleep
Until that moon was gone.

The awakening At dawn she stirred and woke.
I said, " O red, red rose,
What of my little white Love ? "
And never a word she spoke.

Before her mirror long
Stood she, and tired herself,
Her hair flamed in the sun,
Her laugh was like a song.

*They are to ride
forth*

“The day is fair,” she said,
“We will ride forth,” said she,
“I on a milk-white horse,
Thou on a roan of red.

“The world is deck’d like a bride,
And sharp and sweet the air,
Those kings shall follow us,
Thou ridest at my side.”

*They ride, and the
Lover seeth his own
Love*

We rode forth into the dawn,
All a-glitter and shine,
Along the sleepy streets,
Past lodge and river and lawn,

And fields that good men till ;
And out by the western gate
I saw my little white Love
Simpling upon a hill.

*He showeth her to
Red Rose*

I said, “ Red rose, red rose,
Seest thou who is there ?
It is my own white Love,
Mark with what grace she goes.”

“ Pardie, pardie, good Sir,
Is it thy lady Love ?
Then, if thou lovest me true,
Get down and speak with her.”

*He will not go to
his own Love*

She smiled her smile of light,
She pursed her crimson lips,
She let her hand touch mine,
Her eyes shone very bright.

I said, “ Red rose, I ween
That thou and I are as one,
I would not leave they side
An she were Mary Queen.”

*Red Rose dealeth
shrewdly with him*

So that we rode and came
Unto a fair green place ;
She put her head on my breast,
And softly said my name.

Those three Kings stood apart,
Plotting my death they stood ;
She took a jewelled knife,
And stabbed me in the heart.

*And leaveth him to
perish*

And turned her milk-white steed,
And kissed me on the lips,
And laughed to those three Kings,
And left me there to bleed.

And, with those Kings, did ride
Away in the sunshine :
I could not wish her hurt,
“ O red, red rose, ” I cried.

He riseth up

Like torches in the sky
At night the stars awoke,
The ghost of me stood up
And ached exceedingly.

The world seemed full of shows :
I went to mine own door,
And look'd on my white Love,
And cried, “ O red, red rose ! ”

The end

Spring sitteth at her loom,
Weaving her green and gold,
The sweet lark sitteth in heaven,
And thou in thy red room !

My white Love, still as a mouse,
Still and quiet and pale,
Sitteth beside her babe,
And thou in thy red house !

1903

WAR POEMS

War

I

She took of fire of the sun and steel of the icy moon
And rage of furious seas and breath of the hurricane,
And silver sound of April and blossom and dust of June,
And tears of women and terror of babes and blood of the
hearts of men ;
Through nights athrob with her rose-red star and aghast
with the wild star's falling,
And days of summer whereby she was throned and days
of autumn that crowned her,
She went to make dread feasts and great pomps ; and she
reigneth—for ever calling
The fairest and kindest and bravest and youngest and
dearest around her.

2

For them she hath lures which are swifter than joy and
brighter than hope
And subtler than aught that cunning deviseth or gildeth,
Surer to snare and safer to catch than love-lamp or silken
rope
Hung from the moonlit window for token of love which
yieldeth ;

She hath content for the high wild heart and content for
the wooer,
She is the lover of lovers, whom loving, none may love
other,
Softly she sayeth the names of her children that they may
go to her,
And she gathers them to her stark fierce bosom like a proud
mother.

3

Of old hath she been contemned by mouths that were
zealous and wise,
Sister of Murder, procuress and bondwoman of Death ;
Yet is the blood on her hand made snow by the Faith in
her eyes,
And the tongue of triumphing Time for her righteousness
witnesseth :
Out of all darkness she comes with all sweet light on her
tresses,
Into the ear of the flesh she crieth quick speech of the
spirit ;
And she bringeth the world from its travail and ache to
its certain comfort, and blesses
Them that endure and are broken and spent for them that
inherit.

A Song of Pride for England

I

Lo, the stark heavens are stirred :
He cometh, plumed and spurred,
To say the undaunted word,
 England !
With high and haughty breath
He hails the hordes beneath ;
This hath he for their teeth—
 “ England again ! ”

II

King George in London Town,
Sweareth our own's our own :
Whose might shall pluck us down,
 England ?
Glories of slaughtered hosts,
Splendours of English ghosts
Beckon us from our coasts,
 England again !

III

Shrewd, on our world of seas,
Waketh at dawn a breeze
Singing bold melodies,
England !
Rose-red the long day falls,
And the frore night wind calls
To our proud Admirals,
“ England again ! ”

IV

Our Ensign flutters still
On the unshaken hill ;
Our Bugle vaunteth shrill,
England !
What of the heathen draf ?
They are as burning chaff,
Into their eyes we laugh,
England again !

V

Death in his charnel-house,
Rage and the Devil’s spouse
Hate—ruffle not your brows,
England !

Blood of your fathers' blood,
Bred of great motherhood,
Suckled on ancient good—
“ England again ! ”

VI

You shall be steel and ice,
Stronger than love, and thrice
Stricken for sacrifice,
England !
You shall bow to the flail,
The hammer and the nail,
And perish—and prevail,
England again !

VII

While this our little land
Hath a man-child to stand,
He shall lift up his hand,
England,
To smite the accursèd bars :
Out of the din of wars
He shall shout to the stars,
“ England again ! ”

VIII

Troop you from field and fold,
Market and shop of gold ;
Let the full tale be told,

England !

Time beats his pitiless drum,
Fate's at her iron loom,
For the New Earth, or Doom—

England again !

Sons

I

We have sent them forth
To Christ's own rood ;
Their feet are white
On the fields of blood,
And they must slake
Their young desire
In wells of death
And pits of fire.

The red cock crows
And the grey cock crows,
And there is red
On Flanders' snows ;
And sun-scorched sand
And thirsty clay
Drink a red spilth
By Suvla Bay.

And where Azizeah's
Turrets gleam,
And Tigris glitters,
Like a dream,
Through nights of scent
And tinkling sounds,
Sleep rose-white dead
With rose-red wounds.

II

I saw the Shadow
Count the fair
Sum of his takings ;
Them that were
Children in years
When they were sped,
And now are mighty
Being dead.

Like galaxies
Of stars, they shone
In the great places
They have won ;
He sets them there,
No sting hath he,
And his is not
The Victory.

And whom he spared
I saw return,
Ambassadors
From his brave bourne—
Strong with the wisdom
Of the Wars,
Bright from the camps
Of Conquerors.

Unto the End

Though the rivers of crystal run blood till the seas are
blood,
And the lands which were for proud harvests gape livid with
death ;
And the goodness we had of the days is emptied for ever of
good,
And for ever the balm of the silver night faileth and
perisheth ;
And though from the womb our sons know only to rage
and kill,
And our daughters forget that a bride is wed not for widow
but wife ;
And War, which the wise of their wisdom accounted the
chiefest ill,
Boasteth itself for the glory and blessing and purport of
life ;
Yea, though these things were established for ever—how
should we quail,
Or falter, or doubt that the sheer, stark soul of us shall
prevail ?

We are done with the laughter and solace, the softness, the
bloom,
The clusters and sheaves of content, the honey and milk ;
We are gone from the beautiful places unto the brinks of
doom,
Where that is sharp which was sweet and that is steel
which was silk,
And that is woe which was flesh, and hurt which was
delight,
And the fairest and kindest love must sort with a lurking
hate,
And the heart of pity be stone within her, and wrong be
but right,
And our very prayers are for power to punish and desolate ;
Yea, stript to the spirit we stand, naked and very sure
Of naught but the spirit, which, if it triumph not, yet shall
endure.

Post Prælium

[*Jutland*]

I

Lovely, and mightily-thewed
Mother of this great brood,
Lo, the beatitude
Falls on thee like a flood,
And folds thee where thou'rt stood
Fronting the destinies
With comfortable eyes.

II

Now knowest thou the rose
Which to the sweet air blows
In thy fair garden-close,
And thine own lark that throws
Down music as he goes
Vaunting to heaven of thee,
Are not for the enemy.

III

Now knowest thou the maid
Of her young joy unstayed,
And matrons who have said
Most secret prayers, afraid
To tell themselves they prayed—
In thy green land shall dwell
Safe and inviolable.

IV

Woodland and russet farm,
And hamlet, and the warm
And goodly towns where swarm
Thy populations, Harm
Taketh not in her palm ;
And never will they know
The tread of any foe.

V

For round thee is the sheer
Might of the mariner
Whom thou didst suckle and rear
And give for the ships. No peer
Hath he to drive and steer
And fight till the last bells
The steely citadels.

VI

Now knowest thou the deeps
Of a verity thine ; nor sleeps
Nor fails the ward. Who leaps
For what thy Amireld keeps,
Soweth a wind, and reaps
 The whirlwind from thy guns,
 The lightning from thy sons.

VII

Blessèd art thou that sent
These to be strawne and spent ;
And blessèd they that went,
Singing with heart's content,
Unto the sacrament ;
 And blessèd they that mourn
 Whoso shall not return.

Marching On

I

I heard the young lads singing
In the still morning air,
Gaily the notes came ringing
Across the lilac'd square ;
They sang like happy children
Who know not doubt or care,
“ AS WE GO MARCHING ON.”

And each one sloped a rifle
And each one bore a pack ;
They had no grief to stifle,
No tears to weep, alack ;
They were too blithe to question
Which of them should come back,
As they went marching on.

II

Oh, thou whose eyes are sorrow,
And whose soul is sorrowing,
Who knowest that each to-morrow
A deeper woe may bring,
And knowest that all the comfort
Is the very littlest thing
While they go marching on ;

These sons of thine seek glory,
As the bridegroom seeks the bride,
And who shall tell the story
Of their triumph and their pride ?
Like lovers, for the love of thee
They have lain them down and died ;
And they go marching on.

III

They march by field and city,
By every road and way,
A march which angels pity
And none may stop or stay
Till the last head is rested
On the last crimson clay ;
So they go marching on !

They march in the broad sunlight
And by the lovers' moon,
Into the flame and gun-light
From morns and eves of June,
And Death for their entrancèd feet
Pipes an obsequious tune,
And keeps them marching on.

IV

And mid the battle thunder,
And in the fields of blood,
They see the untarnished wonder,
The healing, and the good
Which passeth understanding
And can not be understood ;
And they go marching on.

They see the rose's brightness
Made perfect and complete,
Lilies and snows of whiteness,
And wings of gold that beat
For ever and for ever
Before the Paraclete ;
And they go marching on.

Sergeant Death

Oh, Sergeant Death,
I've served with you,
And chanced my breath
A time or two !

I've seen brave men
Turn green as sin,
When you have coughed,
“ Fall in, fall in ! ”

I've heard brave men
With cold fear shout,
When you have piped,
“ Fall out, fall out ! ”

Where'er a lad
Would do his part,
'Tis you that probes
His inmost heart.

Though all be stirred
By drums a-roll,
'Tis you that finds
The soldier soul,

And takes him through
The conqueror's drill,
And helps him home,
Or leaves him still.

'Tis you that puts
In one parade
Them that were anxious
And afraid,

And them that were
Fed-up and sick,
And them that begged
You to be quick,

And them that gave
You laugh for laugh,
And bitterer chaff
For bitter chaff. . . .

Oh, you are old,
And fierce and wise,
But there is goodness
In your eyes.

And still your health
Goes round the tents—
“The Father of
The Regiments ! ”

Kitchener

If Death had questioned thee,
“ Soldier, where wouldst thou take
The immitigable blow ? ”
Thou hadst answered, “ Let it be
Where the battalions shake
And break the entrenchèd foe.”

Yet wert thou nobly starred
And destined. Thou dost die
On the grim English sea ;
Thou goest to the old tarred
Great Captains, and shalt lie
Pillowed with them eternally.

And they shall stir from their rest
Each in his lordly shroud,
And say, “ 'Fore God, we have room,
So are the deeps made proud ;
Behold the glory on his breast,
Kitchener of Khartoum ! ”

For Righteousness' Sake

Man that is born of a woman—
 The creature of doom,
Who lives that the Shadow may summon
 Men forth to the tomb ;

Who knoweth not wages or earning,
 Who sows not to reap,
Whose labour and passion and yearning
 Must finish with sleep ;

Who catches in vain at the glory ;
 Whose brightness is rust ;
Whose days are a breath and a story ;
 Whose house is the dust ;

Who lies, if he vaunt him of merit,
 Whose tree bears no fruit,
Who quenches the spark of the spirit
 With lusts of the brute ;

Yet—standeth erect to the fighting
And whirlwind and flame,
And squanders himself for the smiting
Of Terror and Shame ;

Who gathereth his weakness and brings it
Where furies move ;
And loves the world so that he flings it
Away out of love ;

Even though he were fashioned to perish
By ordinance grim,
The Sons of the Morning would cherish
Memories of him :

Who owing a debt went and paid it,
And kept with his blood
The Earth for the Wisdom who made it
And saw it was good.

John Travers Cornwell

“Boy (first class) John Travers Cornwell, of Chester, was mortally wounded early in the action. He nevertheless remained standing alone at a most exposed post quietly awaiting orders till the end of the action, with the gun’s crew dead and wounded all round him.”—ADMIRAL BEATTY

Mortally hurt, alone he stood,
England, in thy great fortitude.

While his spent shipmates round him lay
He held on in thine ancient way—

A stripling with the veteran eye
For the hard front of destiny.

Effacing Time shall not destroy
The memory of this, thy boy.

On his young head the glory falls,
As on the lordliest admirals ;

Fate sets his name in honour grim
And even Death is proud of him.

Steel-True and Blade-Straight

I

Steel-true and blade-straight—
There's your man ! And soon or late
 He is England—all of her ;
 All the Blood that makes her fair,
All the Soul that makes her great,
Steel-true and blade-straight.

II

Steel-true and blade-straight—
Neither puffed out, nor elate,
 Neither glad, nor sad, nor sorry,
 Seeking neither grace nor glory,
Steadfast at the battered gate—
Steel-true and blade-straight.

III

Steel-true and blade-straight—
Let the pillars of the State
 Wrangle to their hearts' content—
 His to fend and thrust and feint,
His to watch and ward and wait,
Steel-true and blade-straight.

IV

Steel-true and blade-straight—
While we bawl and perorate,
 Big with “ifs” about our war—
 He, the undoubting conqueror,
Knocks the nonsense out of Fate—
Steel-true and blade-straight.

Sursum

I saw his dread plume gleaming,
As he rode down the line,
And cried like one a-dreaming
“ That man, and that, is mine ! ”

They did not fail or falter
Because his front so shone ;
His horse’s golden halter
With star-dust thick was sown.

They followed him like seigneurs,
Proud both of mien and mind—
Colonels and old campaigners
And bits of lads new-joined.

A glittering way he showed them
Beyond the dim outpost,
And in his tents bestowed them—
White as the Holy Ghost.

And, by the clear watch-fires,
They talk with conquerors,
And have their hearts' desires,
And praise the honest wars.

And each of them in raiment
Of honour goeth drest,
And hath his fee and payment,
And glory on his breast.

O woman, that sit'st weeping—
Close, like the stricken dove,—
He is in goodly keeping,
The soldier thou didst love !

The Full Share

“I take my full share of responsibility for the initiation of that operation—my full share. . . . I do not propose to adopt the attitude of a white-sheeted penitent, with a couple of candles, one in each hand, doing penance and asking for absolution.”

—MR. ASQUITH.

I

Do not expect from me
(Whom you have set
In this authority)
Defence, apology,
Excuse or plea,
Or even a regret :
No sheeted penitent
Am I,
To stand
Candle in hand
And cry
That I may be forgiven,
Absolved or shriven,
For what is spilt and spent.

All that has happened so
Is so.
I lay it bare ;
Admission I make :
The wisest of us err,
The best plans go awry ;
Perhaps we blundered sore ;
But I would have you know
No one is more
Responsible than I,
And of the accountability I take
My share—and my full share !

II

In far Gallipoli
Where Achi frowns to the sea,
And wild war-fires are set ;
Stark to the Eastern moon,
There lies,
Huddled in the last agonies,
Beside his shattered gun,
A new-slain English boy :
And his dead eyes
Hint not apologies,
Excuses or regret,
Neither dismay nor joy ;
No candles at his head
Nor sheet nor shroud has he,

And by his blood-soaked bed
No shriving words are said.

It is a woman's son—
The child she bare
In England free and fair :
Following the English drum
Hitherward is he come,
So to annul
And break
Himself for England's sake—
He, too, hath taken his share,
And taken it in full.

III

Lord of the Mysteries,
Who on the shining air
Launchest despair,
And black, by rose and vine,
Spilkest the battle-line ;
This is the Bread, and this
The perfumed Wine :
No period dost Thou set
Unto our dole and fret,
Which, being of Thee, are Thine ;
Yet, if we yield our breath
To death,

Or keep in strife
This fripperied fardel life,
Help each of us to bear
His share—and his full share !

Killed

Lieutenant Keen was “ great,” and yet
He would look over the parapet ;
And something smacked him in the head,
And he lay down as dead as dead.

He sluttered down, all proud and grim,
And we set to and buried him ;
All night he lay and took his rest
With lumps of Flanders on his breast.

All day he lay in Flanders ground
And rested, rested, good and sound ;
But when the dog-star glittered clear
He calls, “ By Jove, it’s dark down here ! ”

“ Sergeant, ain’t I for rounds ? ” sings he,
“ And where’s the bally Company ? ”
And he was answered, with respect,
“ Here, sir—all present and correct ! ”

And—sure as I’m a man—at night
He comes along the trench, as white

And cheerful as the blessed saints,
To see if there was "no complaints."

They cannot quieten that boy's ghost,
He'll have no truck with no "Last Post,"
They mark him "Killed," but you may swear
He's with us, be it foul or fair.

He goes before us like young fire,
A soldier of his soul's desire;
Through the hell-reek that smothers us,
He fathers us and mothers us.

When we have pushed the German swine
Across the pretty river Rhine,
Maybe he'll bide where he was spent
And lie down happy and content.

A Chant of Affection

And so you hate us ! You
Hate England—hate, hate, hate !
A bestial brewage, racked
Out of the pits and holes
Of foulness and deceit,
Riots in your unclean veins ;
You burn, you rage, you choke
You spit and sputter hate
For England ! . . . To the Russ,
Battering your Eastern doors,
You have a mind to turn
The blubbered other cheek ;
The Gaul—your sweet old friend
And crony of your love—
For him, dear soul, white flags,
Garlands and pretty lures,
Doves, promises, desire
To load him with the half
Of that you filched away :
For Belgia, “ bleeding hearts,”
Laments, regrets, “ mild rule,”
Cheap headstones for her sons,

And for her daughters *You*—
That they may suage your lusts
And, by the fireless hearths
You have made desolate,
Be snugly brought to bed
Of further Attilas
And blonde Barabbases—
Lieges and “ gun fodder ”
For the top-heavy Dolt
Whom ye call Kaiser and Lord. . . .
Yea, holy are your eyes
And filled with kindly beams
For these and all the world :
On Turk and Pole and Boer,
Bulgar, American,
You smile your panderous smile—
But for the English—Hate !

And you will rend our Throat,
And you will bite our Heel,
And you will stamp us down :
You put an oath on bronze
(Not paper this time—bronze !
Which is not easily blown
On winds of treachery !)
You have made an oath of bronze,
An oath no wind may shake,
An oath for your sons and their sons
One foe and one alone—

ENGLAND! For England hate !
And hate and hate and hate !

How shall we hate you back
We who are England ; we
Whose bugles round the world
Blow to the punctual dawns
And fail not ; whose great ships
Traverse the seventy seas
And always are at home ;
Who are too big, for hate,
Too careless and too fine,
Too tempered and too proud—
How shall we hate you back ?
For when you see us whole
Our strength is an honest strength
And based on what we love ;
And these be two things we love :
Honour, and our fair land—
Honour which is the crown
And jewel and lamp and light
Of them that are not clods ;
And our fair English land
Peopled with forthright men
Who make no talk of God,
But fear Him in their hearts,
And fear nor hate, nor death
Nor the King's enemies ;—
A land of blunt, brave men,
And blessed with memories

Of old and high renown ;
Old Captains who beat forth
In lofty ships of war,
Tawny and tarred and proud,
Old Admirals, who sleep
Safe in the ancient deeps,
And dream for England still :
Oh, you shall stamp us down
When all the seas are red
With the good English blood,
And all the beaches white
With decent English bones,
And when our pleasant fields
Are hillocked with carrion flesh
That cries and cries to heaven
Of coward Englishmen,
And the white Yorkshire rose
Blushes for shame of us,
And her red sister-rose
Blanches for shame of us,
Then shall you stamp us down,
Then shall you suck the blood
Out of the English throats,
And tack this Isle of ours
On to your German wastes !
O haters, fools and blind
Go home and make dolls' eyes,
And silly little clocks,
And plaisters for our gout,
Wimples and crisping-pins !

For now the outraged stars
Have seen enough of you,
The silver moons are sick
That ye still blot the earth ;
From icy, hidden peaks
And far-off fastnesses,
From chambers of the South
And in the unconquerable heart
Of England, ware and wake,
The tempest gathers up
That shall be flails for you,
And break you in your place
And scatter you like straw ;
Instead of “ Hate, hate, hate,”
You shall cry “ Doom, doom, doom,”
And you shall wail and mourn,
With none to comfort you
But sprites of murdered babes,
And ghosts of women raped,
And wraiths of great slain men.

The Riddle

Through a glass darkly I can see
Slaves, in whose blood ran liberty ;

Creatures of anguish, fear and wrong,
Abject of eye, furtive of tongue ;

Whose joy hath taken wings and flown,
Whose strength no longer is their own ;

Whose high tower toppled to the dust,
Whose silk and steel are moth and rust ;

Whose name is water and shall be
A byword and a mockery ;

Who eat the portion of the thrall,
Whose drink is vinegar and gall ;

Whose flesh doth suffer whip and rope,
Whose children's children may not hope ;

Upon whose fetters chuckling Fate
Hath set her scornful mark " Too late."

And on whose brows that fronted God
The leering Beast writes “ Ichabod.”

Read you the riddle : who are these
So naked to their enemies—

And so possessed of their old phlegm
That one shall safely spit on them ?

I will not tell you who they are ;
It is enough—THEY LOST THE WAR.

A Rhyme of Gaffer D—

I know the old chap very well,
He called on us when I was young—
They sang a hymn and tolled a bell,
“Friend after friend departs,” they sung.

He took my father somewhat quick,
He took my brother from his play,
He took my dog (a dirty trick—
Though he’s the Gaffer, anyway).

After—I didn’t mind of ‘im
A-cuttin’ up his grisly capers,
For years and years, although I’d seem
To read about ‘im in the papers.

When war broke out, I saw the bills,
What says, “Your King and Country Need You,”
My ‘eart with Rule Britannia fills
An’ whispers, “Go where glory leads you.”

But though I loved the 'Uns a treat,
An' would have 'listed brisk an' 'earty,
I always seemed to get cold feet
'A-thinkin' of that same Old Party.

Till—well, at last, it had to be,
My girl, she says, " You'll make me proud ! "
" Wot about '*im* ? " says I. Says she,
" Sign up, my lad, an' '*im* be blowed ! "

An' so I signed and so I joined,
An' learnt my facin's an' my drillin',
An' how to wash my ears behind,
An' always be alert an' willin'.

An' how to do things at the word,
An' stamp when 'alted or " attention "-ed,
An' all the time I never heard
The Old Chap's name so much as mentioned.

Our little lot, they say, is " it,"
And not a bunch to stick at trifles,
In fact for 'ficiency an' grit
We're next door to the Artists' Rifles.

An' yet, my friends, twixt you an' me,
Despite the bluff they feed the boys on,
The Reg'ment don't like Gaffer D——
An', *reely*, 'ates '*im* worse than poison.

He is the Major's constant dread,
The fly in the Lieutenant's ointment,
Even the Colonel, so 'tis said,
Will meet him only by appointment.

Oh, he's a wash-out, that Old Gent !
If 'tweren't for him, so 'elp me never,
We'd all of us be well content,
To fight for 'arth and 'ome for ever !

You should ha' seen 'im t'other day,
A-beckonin' us across the trenches—
The very corporils knelt to pray,
An' look at pictures of their wenches !

We did our bit—oh yes, we did,
An' he was in his element—
He took a toll which can't be hid
Until the big new draft is sent.

But still I thank my stars, I does,
('Appy am I it should be so)
That though he wasn't kind to us
He weren't no kinder to the foe. . . .

You won't get rid of that Old Card,
Leastways till you've got rid of sin,—
So here's his 'ealth, say I—the Hard
Old Chap that spoils the soldierin' ;

The Chap that mocks at mothers' prayers,
And loves to widow the young bride ;
Yet hurteth only whom he spares,
And makes the rest most satisfied.

The Ass

The enemy without—and he within !
You meet him on the stairs of your high tower
All simpers. At his nose he hath a flower,
Upon his tongue cheap honey ; and his chin
Waggeth for ever. If we lose or win—
Please don't talk war ! The witty luncheon hour,
The joyous week-end ! Good souls, who could sour
So blithe a spirit, or prick so sleek a skin ?

Cheerfullest wight ! It is his constant whim
To beam on Fate. All that he asks is love,
A salad, a glass of wine, music that charms,
A book, a friend, and “ the blue sky above ”—
And underneath, the everlasting arms
Of them that toil and groan and bleed for him.

The Diners

“*They died content,*” he said,
And bent a well-groomed head
Sweetly above the soup :
“*Ah, splendid lads !*” he sighed,
“*And . . . (Waiter !) . . . think !—they died Content ! . . . (the cantaloup*
Wasn’t quite ripe enough).
Real top-hole lads and tough !—
A lesson for those swine !—
(Yes, yes—uncork the wine !)

“*Top-hole, I tell you !—(pish,*
I’m not so keen on fish !—
Don’t matter—eat it, dear)—
Beat us ? Good Lord ! No fear !—
With lads like that about !
(Well, well—they *call* it trout !)
Where can you match ’em ? (Oh—
Pâtés of riz de veau !)

“*All heroes !—(Gad—that’s Jones—*
Wolfin’ his damned grilled bones—

Pardon—but really—well—
Grilled bones for dinner ! . . . “ Pell-Mell ” ?
No, darling, let us go
And see the other show)—
Our chaps are simply ‘it’ !—
(Not just the weeniest bit ?
The waiting here’s absurd :
When *will* they bring the bird ?)

“ *They died content ! . . .* (Don’t look—
There’s Mumble and the duke
And Mrs. M.—Of course
She *does* laugh like a horse !)—
They died like gentlemen !
(Chicken ? No—ancient hen !—
But still the salad’s good)—
My God—the British blood !

“ *You very nearly kissed*
That fearful Casualty List ?—
Ah, precious, you’ve a heart !—
(What excellent strawberry tart !)—
Yes, Haig’s O.K., you bet
He’ll smother ’em—and yet
There must be sacrifice !—
(I shouldn’t risk the ice !)

“ (Coffee for two—no cream !)
It all seems like a dream :
Still, we shall win right through,
As we were bound to do. . . .

*They died content!—(Why, sure!—
Did-ums want its liqueur? . . .
And, waiter—that cigar!
And, waiter—call the car!—
And, waiter—bring the bill!—
These ‘ neutrals’ make me ill!) ”*

July 1, 1916

We were unprepared,
We were most unwise ;
We have been like that
For centuries—
But we've taught ourselves a thing or two,
And we're muddling through.

Twenty-three months !
Twenty-three Men !
Oh, the muddle
And muddle again !—
One can't deny it, because it's true—
But we're muddling through.

Shells and soldiers,
Piles and files ;—
The roar goes up
On seventy miles :
We know now what we always knew—
We shall muddle through !

Oh, Banner of ours
That shines in the wars,
Oh, excellent bars
Red, white, and blue,
With glory in every fold of you—
We shall muddle through !

To the Kaiser

[*With a Child's Drum*]

He was three years old, a mirthful, tumbling wight,
To see your cohorts pass, he stood at stare,
Unwitting, but pleased ; and out of his delight
He laughed you forth a *Vive l'Angleterre*.

Boiled the insulted blood in the high veins
Of the most puissant and invincible
(Whose fathers, spat upon, remarked “ It rains ! ”) :
Your soldier fired—rebellious innocence fell.

Wherefore we send you, Conqueror, a child's drum,
And you shall beat upon it as you go
Bloody stalkin to your crazy doom—
The plaything of your murdered baby foe.

1912

[First published in 1910]

O Fair and Fair and Fierce,
Tigress mother of ours,
Beautiful-browed, deep-thewed
Passionate mother of ours,
Hearken ! The drums of doom
Are beaten at the gate,
And it is meet that THOU,
Whose breasts are ice and steel,
Whose heart is all a fire,
Should show us frightened eyes,
And lips becomingly blenched ;
So say the very wise.

For when the thrones were made
Thine, the throne of the thrones,
Was set in the yeasty seas :
Built and bastioned and braced,
A tower of brass, a rock,
An adamant pyramid,
A strength unshakeable ;

And to thy hands were given
Power and dominion
Wherever water is salt,
Wherever a shipboy sings,
Wherever ships may ride ;
So that the seas of the world
Though they be seventy times seven,
Are English seas, and thine ;
Whether it be the harsh
And bitter seas of the north,
Flurried by little winds,
And pushed by piping gales
Against the winking stars ;
Or the still blue middle seas ;
Or where the daffodil moon
Slips down an amethyst sky
To walk with silver feet
On the Southern, soft lagoons,
It is the English sea. . . .

Who is this that waits
By the weary Baltic shore,
By the kneeling Baltic shore,
With shrouded arm and hand,
And a hand whereon there gleams
A glove of impudent mail ?
Behind him stretch afar
The pleasant, placid spas,
Fattened with English aches ;
And the four-three factories,

And the reek of the dumper's fires,
And the pretty river Rhine
(Which owes so much to Cooks),
And rows, and rows, and rows
Of flat-head soldier men,
And the works of Schichau and Krupp,
And for a sign in the blue,
The tender himmelblau,
The good, grey Count's balloons !

Do you know this singular Lord,
This humorous, hearty Prince,
Whose cry is " Peace, Peace, Peace,"
Abroad, and at home " War, War " ;
Who preaches through the day
With olive twigs in his hair,
And rises in the night
To fan the secret forge ;
Who says, " Why should we fight ?
Prithee, why should we fight ?
What cause have we to fight ?
Are we not friends, please God,
And CUSTOMERS ? . . . My glass
Is raised to you and Peace
Hurra, Hurra, Hurra ! "

Who says again, " My arms
Must flourish on the seas,
My arms and mine alone
If you wish a place in the sun ;
As for the one in our path

The one whom we all so love,
By nineteen hundred and twelve
I shall be ready for HER !!
I have promised you your Day—
Hurra, Hurra, Hurra ! ”

It is nineteen hundred and ten
And the Seas are English seas,
They will be English seas
Till they shall give up Drake
And the thousand English hearts
Which have made rich the depths :
Until they shall be rolled
Together like a scroll
They shall be English seas.
We sleep sound in our beds ;
We fear no fist of mail ;
We fear no withered arm ;
We are not afraid of Krupp
Nor yet of Blohm and Voss.
We wish you the Devil’s joy
Of all you have hidden and built ;
It is nineteen hundred and ten.
We have simple words for you :
In the English history books
There is EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIVE ;
We say to you when you pray,
Thank Heaven if we do not write
In the English history books
With beautiful German blood
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE.

Towards the Reckoning

With tongue of oil and breath of myrrh
They bid us turn the other cheek,
And mark the blessing for the meek,
The mourner and the peacemaker.

They counsel, “ Love your enemies ;
Do good to them who bear you hate ;
Agree thou quickly ! ” and they prate
Of being, with the great wisdom, wise.

“ Of Eye for Eye and Tooth for Tooth
None righteously exacts the debt ;
It is forbidden ! ” they say—and yet
They publish only half the truth.

And by their speech the grinning Host
Which hath Blasphemed takes lease to live. . . .
Harden our hearts, lest we forgive
The Sin against the Holy Ghost !

Verdun

“ One shall be taken and the other left ”—
’Tis so with men, and even so with forts ;
One falls, another stands—the strong cohorts
Beat vainly on it in rage of divers sorts—
One shall be taken and the other left.

One shall be taken and the other left—
Behold the Bride that singeth through the gloom,
And waiteth still with scorn the German groom,
And fears not to be given away by Doom !—
One shall be taken and the other left.

One shall be taken and the other left—
O eyes of Hell and fronts of bloody brass,
France, by her Lilies, sweareth ye may not pass
Unto her—though the bar were brittlest glass !—
One shall be taken and the other left.

The Dublin Rising

I

Our right—and your old wrongs.
With men's and angels' tongues
We did discourse. Alas—
The tinkling cymbal and the sounding brass !

We “ruled.” You mourned and planned.
We had gifts to understand
All knowledge, all dreams, all star-sad mystery ;
Mountains we moved, while you made prophecy.

We doubted not. Your Eyes
Were set on Paradise.
Yet always, and most grievously,
Both of us missed the “greatest” of “these three.”

II

Your fair dead—our fair dead.

Now, by each fallen head
And each rebuking wraith,
Swear we another Faith.

Your night of tears—our night.

But, by the unquenchable Light
Toward which, blindly, we grope,
Behold, another Hope !

Our agony—and yours.

Yea, by the Passionate Hours
And the Exceeding Bitter Cry,
Do we still lack . . . the Charity !

Wounded

Back again ! Back again ! Out o' blood and mud and rain ;
Out o' gun-sound . . . God a'mighty !
Out o' Blazes and home to " Blighty " !—
Broke right up and full o' pain,
But back again—back again !

Back again ! Back again ! By an extry special train
With the Red Cross on the panels—
Snuggled in me nice new flannels—
Like the blinkin' King o' Spain—
Back again ! Back again !

Back again ! Back again ! Clapham Junction plain as
plain !—
Just as grimy, just as gloomy,
Just as home-like, and as roomy—
Dead on time—we can't complain—
Back again ! Back again !

Back again ! Back again ! Waterloo and rows o' men
Down the platform standing ready
For to lift us quick and steady—

Nurses smiling—"How's the pain?"
Back again! Back again!

Back again! Back again! London town and home again—
Never knew how much they loved us,—
In the ambulance they've shoved us—
Nearly numbered with the slain
But back again—back again!

Come Young Lads First

Sergeant went a-walking
Wi' ribbons in his cap,
“ Ho-ho,” says he, “ His Majesty
Wants just another chap,
An’ as ’tis plain, for married men
He no more cares a rap,
Come young lads first ! ”

Wherefore the bairn I suckled
Goes now in khaki drest ;
So young is he, that he med be
Still cosy from my breast ;
But he marches with his chin up
An’ his chest out, like the rest,
Come young lads first !

Old Squire says, “ Oh yes, oh yes,
’Twill do him worlds of good ” ;
An’ parson says that losing bairns
If rightly understood
Is blessed, an’ ’tis sweet, he says,
For th’ King to shed your blood—
Come young lads first !

“ Abram,” he says, “ gave Isaac,
As writ in Holy Word,
An’ Mary broke the precious box
At the feet of our dear Lord ;
So you must give your boy,” he says,
“ To carry England’s sword,
Come young lads first ! ”

They speak you fair do gentlemen,
But not more fair or free
Than my young son, who’s just the one
His father used to be ;
And when I said he med get killed
He angers up at me,
“ Come young lads first ! ”

For he’s no lad that hides his mind
An’ he’s no lad that feigns ;
An’ while he spoke my heart came back
As easy of its pains
As when his father courted me
Along the scented lanes—
Come young lads first !

A woman has her love (it is
Her glory and her crown)
Which many waters cannot quench
An’ the great floods cannot drown ;
But men have that which passes love
When they hear the bugles blown—
Come young lads first !

An' so the bairn I suckled
Goes now in khaki drest,
So young is he, that he med be
Still cosy from my breast ;
An' he marches with his chin up
An' his chest out, like the rest—
Come young lads first !

The Rhyme of the Beast

Lo, the Beast that rioteth,
Sick with hate and coveting—
To the sons of men he saith,
I will show you a new thing.

This, the Earth, which was the Lord's,
Prodigal of rose and vine,
I will desolate with swords
Till it own that it is mine.

Every brow must bear my brand
Every wrist must wear my steel,
Every throat be for my hand,
Every neck be for my heel.

I will thrust into your souls
Unnamed terrors and despairs—
Populate the air with ghouls
And the sea with murderers.

While I prove that war is war,
 Saints shall mourn and angels weep,
Star commiserate with star,
 Deep cry out to shuddering deep ;

Tigers marvel in their lust
 At the tale of blood and pain,
Pity move the insensate dust,
 And the very stones complain.

I will twist the tongue of Truth
 Till her speech be nought but lies,
I will kill the faith of Youth,
 And the hope in Age's eyes.

Not the altar, nor the tomb,
 Nor the Sufferer on the Tree,
Nor the babe within the womb
 Shall be sacred unto me.

I will rend and rage and cog,
 Rob and ravish till I die ;
I will be the Supreme Hog,
 And the world shall be my sty.

Gaudeamus

“Our whole High Seas Fleet, without any aid from coast batteries, has delivered a victorious blow against the most powerful navy in the world. . . . The great sea fight so eagerly expected on both sides in the North Sea for twenty-two months has been fought out.”—Tageblatt.

This is your “victory” !
We who brook no defeat,
On any sea,
 Being of the old sea-mind,
 Smile the sea-smile, and find
Our very losses sweet.

Of your “victorious blow”
We give you the full joy :
Be glad ! We know
 Our strengths majestical—
 Our every admiral,
Our every sailor boy.

Yet is it not “fought out” :
Lick you your wounds, good friends,
And shout and shout—
 You will not shake
 Nelson, or Hood, or Drake,
Or the appointed ends.

For Whom it may Concern

Ye know that Freedom from her height
Laughs on the world in Fate's despite :

Here is her comfort set :—
England is England yet.

Ye know that all the fronts of War
Shine with the effulgent English star ;

Ye know whose is the blood
That baffled and withstood

Old tyrants ; and full well ye know
There never can be shock or blow
To hurt more than a reed
The panoply of your breed.

How shall you in such armour girt
Palter behind a woman's skirt,
Or that man's pledge, or this
Man's broken promises ?

While the slipped flower of the race
Comports him in the veteran's place—
 His shroud (oh, Fearlessness !)
 Worn like a wedding dress.

You will not grieve those emulous dead
Boy heritors of goodlihead,
 Who haply loved their lives
 Much as you love your wives.

In the Train

There's a soldier,
By gad ! Yes !—
See her gi' me
That there kiss ?—

All the people
Crowdin' by :
An' her a maid
As shy as shy !—

Kiss'd me fair
An' plain an' free
Before the blessed
Company—

Whisper'd when
I bent my head—
Mustn't tell you
What she said !

Little 'un,
But very smart,
Stands no higher
Than my heart !

An' *that* straight
An' unafraid,—
Like a corporal
On parade !

Smiles, an' loves you
With her eyes :
Steadies you,
And keeps you wise :

Learns you all
There is to know :
Makes you feel
It's good to go !

• • •

Women's funny—
So they are !
But who taught 'em
About war ?

Where'd they learn
Their bit of drill ?
Who is it took 'em
Through the mill ?

And gave 'em grit
Enough for ten,
An' sense to share it
With the men ?

An' made 'em so
They'd rather die
Than let a soldier
See 'em cry ?

An' gives 'em strength
And nerve and grace
To look the postman
In the face ?
• • •

Oh, don't forget it,
Mother's son—
They're soldiers, soldiers
Every one !

Soldiers loving
Them that's gone,
Soldiers, soldiers
“ Holding on ”—

Proudest Regiment
Ever known,—
Let us call 'em
“ The Lord's Own.”

Then

I

The parson to the padre said,
“ Once, in a book, these words I read :

‘ If any man take thy coat ; why, go
And offer him thy cloak also.’ ”

2

I heard the lump of shrapnel drone
At midnight in the shatter’d bone :

“ Let us remember that sweet verse
Which bids us bless who brings the curse.”

3

And from his grave one calleth clear :
“ When I come home again, my dear,
 And my head on your bosom lies,
We will forgive our enemies.”

Slain

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori

You who are still and white
And cold like stone ;
For whom the unfailing light
Is spent and done ;

For whom no more the breath
Of dawn, nor evenfall
Nor Spring, nor love, nor death
Matter at all ;

Who were so strong and young
And brave and wise,
And on the dark are flung
With darkened eyes ;

Who roystered and caroused
But yesterday,
And now are dumbly housed
In stranger clay ;

Who valiantly led,
Who followed valiantly,
Who knew no touch of dread
Of that which was to be ;

Children that were as nought
Ere ye were tried,
How have ye dared and fought,
Triumphed and died !

Yea, it is very sweet
And decorous
The omnipotent Shade to meet
And flatter thus.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES



Mulier

I saw a flake
Of the burning lake
Caught in an angel breath,
And blown upon
Until it shone
Brighter than love and death

Through the dark it sped
Like a star that bled
A-kindle ; and I knew
That heaven and hell,
O, Miracle,
Had made the soul of you.

From the Chimney Corner

When we are dead
And newly burièd,
The worm, 'tis said
Out of a pity doth creep
Unto the ear of our sleep,
And with her little voice
Singeth a note or so,
As near 's she can like the lark,
To help us in the dark :
Saying, “ Rejoice, rejoice,
For all shall yet be well ! ”

From Death who is terrible
(Yet hath no sting),
And from the grave
Which bindeth us
(Yet hath no victory),
Physicians might not save
Old parson. Thus,
He lay
Down in the churchyard clay ;

And I have heard folk say
That on the second day
The kind worm passeth that way
And sidleth up to him,
And doth her best to sing,
Saying, “ Be unafraid,
’Tis mortal lonesome here,
Meanly thy bed is made,
Thou lack’st both light and cheer
And shalt, for many a year :
Yet lift up th’ heart—endure,
For the reward is sure ! ”—

‘ Um,’ sniffs old parson, “ *two of a trade!* ”

The Witling

I

An old poor rogue went down to the Ferry,
Merry as merry.

“ Tho’ some do die on the gallows tree,
God send they dye a good colour ! ” quoth he.

“ For just as many years they’ll be dead
As who died snug i’ the ’spital bed !

“ And Moll and Doll and the Pope of Rome
La, la—each goeth the same way home !

“ And as for doleful dumps, why—drat ’em ! —
As Misery sang—‘ Cheer up for Chatham ! ’ ”

II

“ Boatman, thou tarriest,” he saith,
“ ’Tes piercin’ here by thy black staith ;

“ And I ha’ found nor crust nor apple
Since yon loon got me by the thrapple.

“ Nor brandy-wine is brought to cheer me—
A dead man hath small luck, I fear me.

“ Boatman, what meaneth thy ill look ?
Why burns the ripple thou hast strook ?

“ Why is the hand thou touchest me with
Unkinder than was that of Death ? ”

The Little Old Knife

With my little old Knife
I killed the paramour ;
Her bosom was a soft flower,
She had a girdle of vair
And ruby combs in her hair :
“ Come hither,” calls she, “ thou old wife,”
Flirting her fan in the bower,
“ And pick up our kerchy,” calls she ;
“ An ’t please you, madam,” quod I—
“ And, madam . . . once only we die
So here’s good once for ye
And everlasting rest—
Both from my little old knife ! ”

With my little old knife—
Ahey ! she looked and smiled
Like a sleepy three-year child,
And gaped, and drooped, and was dead ;
Only a trickle of red
Slipt down her heavenly breast :
“ Thus endeth,” quod I, “ a strife,

An ache, a fragrance, a power,
A shame, a wisdom, a mesh,
A passion and rose of flesh,
All finished at *my* hour
And all with my little old knife ! ”

Thames

River of rivers, that dost lave the might
And pomps and ships of England ; if the white
Dawns be upon thee, or thou goest dight
In armour of the sun ; or where at night
With mirrored stars and lamps of chrysolite,
Thou woest this London to the ancient plight,
Thou shalt be goodly for the English sight
And proud till Time shall falter in his flight.

Tiber, Euphrates, Tmolus from the height,
Tigris and Nilus, streams of old delight,
And Abbana and Pharpar which were bright
For queens by swart Damascus—these invite
Words from the dreamer and the Abderite ;
But thou art Thames—glorious in their despite.

The Eagle

They have him in a cage
And little children run
To offer him well-meant bits of bun,
And very common people say, “ My word !
Ain’t he a ’orrible bird ! ”
And the smart, “ How absurd !
Poor, captive, draggled, downcast lord of the air ! ”

Steadfast in his despair,
He doth not rage ;
But with unconquerable eye
And soul aflame to fly,
Considereth the sun.

Sigillum

With thunder shod
The hills be trod
That the children of God
Should quake at his nod ;
He had bolt and rod
For angel and clod
And he wrote on their foreheads , “ Ichabod.”

And in his eyes
Was enterprise
Still to devise
Smooth subtleties
And perjuries
For the King of Flies ;
And goodness and truth were his enemies.

We toil and spin,
Held by the gin
And web of sin
He catcheth us in—
This prance, this grin
With the felon chin—
This Heads-you-lose-and-tails-I-win !

Cromwell

“*The damned Psalm-singing old humbug*”

He had the heart of love,
The heart of love and steel,
The unshaken English heart
That can be merciless,
That can be merciful.

He looked upon the State
And saw that it was foul.
“It shall be cleansed,” he said,
“Straightway it shall be cleansed :
Yea, even with tears and blood !”

The People loved him not,
The Princes mocked at him ;
With Sword and Book he strode
Among them like a tower ;
“I am your Lord,” he said.

He woke the people's strength
To know itself and fear
No other strengths that were ;
For Princes of all time
He read the lesson out.

For England hath he set
The way, the immutable plan,
The rule of Empery :
“ If ye would rule abroad
Be fitly ruled at home.”

To the Little Muse

Out of the light of the age,
An age of superior things,
I call unabashed unto thee
O little Muse of the Valley.

Scorn for the simple pipe,
The trivial, trite tune
That a man may make in his youth,
Is the fashion with all the world ;

A fashion dear to the cheap
Young supercilious scribe,
Also to wits and wags
And every honest fool.

So that thy numerous sons,
Sired by the windy Spring,
Bristle, or blush, or blench
At a hint of their parentage.

But little Muse of ours,
They err who have shame in thee
And grievously do they err
Who bandy thy name when they scoff.

For comely art thou, and wise
And affluent of heart ;
White are thy feet by the brooks
And pleasant thy voice in the vines.

Thy Sister, the beautiful-brow'd
Calm friend of them that endure,
Loveth thee from her heights,
And wherefore not we, who are naught ?

Audrey

Audrey knoweth naught of books,
Naught to captivate the wise ;
But the soul of goodness looks
Through the quiet of her eyes.

She can bake and she can knit,
Cunningly she wields the broom,
All her pleasure is to sit
In a neatly order'd room. . . .

Touchstone, shaping a career,
Shines at each exclusive house :
“ Such a clever man, my dear,
Tied to—just ‘ a country mouse ’ !

“ Married ere he dream’d of *us*,
Ere he knew what gifts he had—
Strange that Fate should yoke him thus,
And very, very, very sad ! ”

Touchstone (let them mark it well),
When the social round is trod,
Bored by dame and demoiselle,
Goes home softly, thanking God.

The Yeoman

Across the counties came the sound
Of war-drums that his fathers knew ;
He had no heart for horse or hound,
He said, “ Am I not English too ? ”

All the old ardours in his blood
Leapt like the flame from smitten steel,
And, to himself revealed, he stood
A buttress of the common weal.

So that if cities give their pride
To strengthen England’s righteous arm,
Men, too, are bred by countryside
And quiet grange and folded farm.

The Finer Spirit

I

I saw the painted worlds go by,
And wonder'd what great good could lie
Beneath that dreadful pageantry.

What lamp of excellent brimming light
Hath kept the immemorial night,
And watches on, in Time's despite ?

What soul of saving sweetness lends
The affable touch to things, and blends
That which begins and that which ends ?

II

And one, whose look shone kindness, ran
And fetch'd his sheaf of charts—the plan
“Mark'd out,” he said, “by God for Man.

“Look thou ! Thus far, and thus, the clear
Seas sparkle ; thou mayst pray, and steer
Thy craft with knowledge here, and here ;

“But by the vasty marge loom
God’s well-set darknesses ; the womb
Bears not the man that skills this gloom.”

III

Another, wisely, “We are sure
Of consciousness and some small store
Of facts, as ‘two and two make four.’

“So nerved and lamp’d may Reason spell
The systems out, and learn to tell
The purport of the inmost cell ;

“But ever as she goes, she sees
In new and old simplicities
The old, invincible mysteries.”

IV

Also another, “Wine and wheat
And oil have we, and liberal heat
Of faithful suns ; our pulses beat

“ With warmth and warm affections—Love
The chief—and like a blessed dove
Joy winnows round us as we move ;

“ And solace cometh for the stroke
And strength to render dear the yoke—
These are enough for honest folk.”

V

Yet who, that waits for happier skies,
Or searches with assiduous eyes,
Or dreams among the butterflies,

Hath never felt the effulgence full
From off the face of things, and all
The sweetness sicken into gall ?

Hath never heard the implacable blast
Crying afar through void and vast,
And stood up shuddering and aghast ?

VI

Yon planet, set out lustrously
Upon the tinted dawn, may be
Some dull immutable agony,

Heavy with hideousness, and fell
And terrible tribes that quake and yell
For ever on the slags of hell ;

Creatures to whom death is a vain
Vague legend of the prime, ere pain
Bore down and smote them heart and brain.

VII

And this dear earth of green and grey
And gold and blue—our broad highway
And pleasant inn whereat we stay

As travellers lighted luckily
On goodly cheer and company
And chambers lavandered—may be

Out of the placid ages come
With all its load of life and bloom
Jump to the verge of some wild doom.

VIII

She called to me across the flood
Of finish'd years, “ Believe thy blood
Which runs a living faith in good ! ”

She called to me out of the still
And molten noon, “ Believe thy will
Which, having force, would banish ill ! ”

She called to me out of the day
Next to be born, “ Believe the clay
Which sends up goodness from decay !

IX

“ Here is the earnest to make whole
The parted circlet of the soul,
To crown thy mirth and star thy dole ;

“ Here is the essence that hath kept
The centuries sweet, and raced and leapt
In veins that wither’d, eyes that wept ;

“ Here is the jewel for the brow
The beam to set the light aglow
And to enrose the pinnacled snow.

X

“ I am the crimson of the rose,
The fair quick flame the crocus shows,
The spice that with the blossom goes,

“ The witchery of the thrush’s tune,
The surge of March, the flash of June,
The marvel of the reapers’ moon,

“ And where the winter aches in white
And mists, I haunt the doubtful light
While dwindling suns loom red and bright ;

XI

“ I am the strength of all the dead,
The wisdom and the goodlihead
And pith of what they did and said ;

“ I am the beauty that hath stood
Bodied, like a beatitude
In soft, calamitous womanhood

“ From the beginning ; and the Rest
Of Saints am I, and all the blest
Rapture of bosoms babes have press’d ;

XII

“ And Man, the spirit and the dust
The god that wears the chains, and must
Be still the creature, and still trust

“ He is not wholly fool and slave,
And live half angel and half knave
To sup with Death and fat the grave ;

“ Man that is nothing, yet divine
Sifting the creeds for one sure sign
Hath sureness in a look of mine ! ”

Materie.

Since wheels for the breaking of bone
And hooks for the tearing of flesh,
And pully and rack
And screws to crack
Sinew and joint are forgone ;
Shall Torture fail of her own
And lose the admirèd moan
Of thrice-slain agony,
Or miss from her ancient mesh
The victim fair and fresh ?
Nay, by the Rood, not she !

Ablaze with glittering skill,
On floors of anguish, still
Plieth she pincer and bowl,
And she hath profuse prey ;
And all night and all day,
Though bodies go safe and whole,
She thanks God for the soul.

Strike

Of trivial tide and chance,
And dribs of circumstance,
Flourish and feint and threat,
Swords that are never wet,
Daggers which only scratch,
Springes not made to catch,
Faleshood none uttereth,
Mumblings of quick apology
For prettily hinted infamy,
And dirty hands in nice clean genteel gloves,
Sick was he unto death.

Dear knows,
He hath seen his share
Of fribbles and fret
And seeming overthrows ;
Hence sayeth he this prayer
To men and destiny :
Let me be stricken fair
With infallacious blows.

Iris and the Water-Lilies

All hidden like a jewel 'mid great hills
There lies a clear-eyed lake, girt round with shade
Of willow and green hazel, and behind,
Forests of oak and fir stretch out and climb
Unto the topmost sunshine of the heights.

Here at the narrower end, a narrow arm
Runs deep into the shadows of the wood,
Losing itself in reedy lonesomeness ;
Dark wilding weeds, lovers of glamour, creep
Along its shallow edges, and, in mid-stream
Like faery shallows waiting for moonrise,
A fleet of pallid water-lilies sleeps.

At daybreak, when the lake was flushed and strewn
With red, and gold, and purple ; and the wood
Shimmer'd with opal tintings, hither came
The wind-footed Iris—Juno's messenger—
Bound on her Autumn task to kill the bloom ;

Upon her brow duskily beat and throbbed
Three lambent starlets, and her filmy hair
Stream'd in a shining tangle after her.
Like starshine from a star, ethereally,
Or as some sweet soul drifting in bliss, she slid
Down the hushed dawn to where those lilies were ;
And seeing them in their white loveliness,
Cold, pallid, pure, she hovered over them,
And smiled upon them, as a mother smiles
Upon her sleeping children. Then the thought
That she must slay them, even as the rest,
Shot through her being like sharp agony,
And lifting up her voice in golden speech,
She cried upon the queen of gods and men :

“O Juno, in thy heaven,
Give ear and pity me ;
Lo, my young heart is riven
With this I do for Thee,
Wherefore I pray a respite from my task.

“In valleys where the sun
Had pitched his golden tent,
As by their beauty won
And bound to sloth, he meant
To rest himself from travel evermore ;

“Vales where the white dove’s wing
Smote ever golden airs,

And she that doth so sing
Mounting her sunny stairs
Met neither cloud nor shadow all the way ;

“Over the quiet top
Of a thyme-laden hill,
Where drowsy bees did drop
Into cool cups, to fill
Their pouches, or to loiter out the hours ;

“Where upward from the corn
The reapers’ voices rang,
And on the airs were borne
Light songs the maidens sang
In the hill-vineyards as the hours slipt past—

“Thither I went to tear
The glory from men’s sight
And over all that’s fair
Have cast the seed of blight ;
And this my deed shall bring me naught but pain.

“For the sweet days will pass,
The sun will leave his camp,
The dead leaves rot i’ the grass,
The airs wax chill and damp,
The white dove shiver and the lark grow dumb ;

“ And they that reaped the corn
And laughed among the vines,
Shall crouch themselves forlorn,
Soon as the frostwork shines
And wish the sun-time were come back again.

“ Therefore, I pray thee, give
These lilies of the lake,
Yet further days to live,
So that the world may make
Some solace of them when all else is dead.

“ And if thou wilt not—why
I break my faith with thee !
These are not meet to die
Being so fair to see,
And they shall live for any touch of mine ! ”

Straightway the sun was darkly cast in clouds
The gloom brought rain and lightning, and a wind
Sprang up and wandered wailing round the woods ;
The fisher at the far end of the lake
Heard troubled cries, toss'd on the fretful air,
And putting forth, and coming to the arm, he saw
One hovering like a glory round the lilies ;
And as he looked the rain was past and done,
And seven slant sunbeams piercing thro' the shade,

Beat on her form, which, like a richer light,
Passed into them, and flushed them with soft hues,
Rose-blush, rare azure, and all fairy tints ;
So that a shaft of painted mist arose
From where she had been ; and as he turned away,
Behold ! a rainbow stretched across the lake.

Brandenburg

Old duke, with the long white beard,
Of what woe art thou afeared ?

What unplumbed and deathly wound
Gapes unto thine eyes profound ?

What disastrous blaze of wing
Smoulders in thy ruby ring ?

From thy cup gleams what disgrace
From they napkin what dismay ?

Like a dreamer answereth he
“ It is one shall follow me,

“ Without virtue, without lust,
A bowellessness, a painted dust

“ Perk’d up in our powerful seats
For a race of liars and cheats,

“ Whom he knoweth not to contemn—
Cozening, and not ruling them ! ”

To John Bunyan

John, it was sweet of thee to be a tinker,
For poor men need a trade ;
And of all trades that picture well with art, John—
Intuitive, innocent art, John—
It is the tinker's.

And it was sweet of thee to go to gaol, John,
Even unto Bedford Gaol :
Why may not all of us forthwith repair, John,
To some such sunless fastness,
And dream large dreams, John ?

And sweet it was of thee to make and write, John,
A sweet and decent book
Which hath an honest savour, like good bread, John,
And keeps the general palate ; though their fictions
Do come, and go, John.

Ah ! who would not, to author such another,
 Take thy extremity,
Thy petty craft ; thy “ gross, implacable ” doctrine ;
Yea, even a threadbare “ treatise-dowered ” spouse, John,
 And thank his stars, John ?

Epitaph

If I should ever be in England's thought

After I die,

Say, "There were many things he might have bought

And did not buy."

"Unhonoured by his fellows he grew old

And trod the path to hell,

But there were many things he might have sold

And did not sell."

Christmas

The Baby of Bethlehem
Lay in a manger,
And the Wise Men and the Kings came
To give him gold and frankincense
And myrrh ;
And Mary, his mother, bent over him,
And he had a star for his own,
Which shone white and fair in the East.

And they have called his name
The Prince of Peace ;
And in his name
Men have cast out devils,
And handled serpents,
And ruled the people,
And builded glories and greatness,
And died very comfortably.

And you of Babylon
Shall consider Him now
Stark, where He stands—
The Man of Sorrows

And Acquainted with Grief,
The Light of the World—
Shivering outside the halls
Wherein you make feasts for Him.

The Christmas Tree

Far off in yon blue Palestine
His star, His star, doth tremble and shine.
O little Baby fair to see,
Bless these branches for Thy tree,

And these twinkling lights whose flame
Is spent to glorify Thy Name,
And these children, whose bright eyes
Are a perpetual sacrifice !

Graves in France

Once there was a little moon
That look'd down on Golgotha
And three crosses rangèd there
And the burdens which they bare :
Naught might hurt or trouble her,
Wise as wise and fair as fair.

O thou silver little moon,
Miles and miles of Golgotha
Now are spread to thy still stare :
And the myriad crosses there
Glimmer on the evening air,
Wise as wise and fair as fair.

The Lonely Man

For him
There were no Springs,
No tender green, no blue, nor living gold,
No rose of holy white,
No blessed rose of red,
No glory of love or death.

The foolish and the faint
Set many marks on him ;
The foolish and the faint
Were easy, and they laughed.
The Fool said, “ Here is one
Less than myself ” ;
The Faint said, “ Here is one
Fainter than I ;
Wherefore lay on,
And may the Lord be praised ! ”

So that his bread was dust,
And his drink bitterness.

And his delight went past him,
And he died
Cheated, and bowed, and dumb.

And when the Worlds,
That are as sand and sand
Upon the winds of Time,
Dropp'd and were quiet,
I looked athwart the broken battlement
And saw his grey soul beating up the dawn

The Admiring Admirer

A daw that went in feathers not his own
Sought out the opulent bird he had them from,
And cried, “ Behold, the plumage thou hast strown
To glory come ! ”

Whereon the other, “ That thou shouldst aspire
So stuck with wastage keeps thee in our love ;
They steal Jove’s thunder and they steal his fire
Yet hurt, not Jove.”

Recipe

CHIDDEN still murmurs,
SLAPPED and RAPPED complain,
HURT, with a thousand tongues,
Whines out his pain.

This is the learning
Unto which we come :
PROPERLY WALLOPED
Is for ever dumb.

In Harness

[*After W. E. HENLEY*]

At the sultry hour of midnight,
When we keep the door propped open
For the little boys with "flimsy"
I can hear our presses whirring.

Whirling, whirring, in a rhythm,
Steady, rational, persistent;
Churning out the first edition,
To illuminate the counties.

Like the noise of many waters
Broken on a weir of tea-trays,
Is the sound—a choppy droning:
And it rather soothes one's heart-strings.

Yet, at times, I can't help thinking
How much of my life goes whirring,
Whirling, whirring, whir, whir, whirring
With the whirring of those presses.

The Good Conceit

[*After W. E. HENLEY*]

Out of the cloud that covers me
And blots the stars and seldom lifts,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my indubitable gifts.

Under the whip, upon the setts,
Men drive me many a galling mile ;
My stock of editors' regrets
Would fill a barrow, but—I smile.

Fast by this trade of wind and wit
I mean to hold till life be done,
And every year I stay in it
Finds, and shall find me, tugging on.

It matters not how stiff and sheer
The climb—how difficult the sum,
I am the man they've got to hear !
I am the man that's bound to come !

July 1899

October 21

Dreams that shine for England still
Like a city on a hill—
Glory snatch'd from old dead woe,
Names of battles long ago !

Yea, with panoply of gold,
Pomps and glitterings manifold,
Shine they forth like happy stars
On the midnight of the wars.

Dreams that heal the banner's rents,
Dreams that fire the regiments,
Dreams that are for English eyes
Smoke of the sweet sacrifice.

Age-old tales of Chivalry
Clearing still its place to die,
Sturdy pikes, stout halberdiers
Conquering through the misty years.

Great grey galleons, saucy sloops,
Proud-eyed men on haughty poops—
One of them, with breast ablaze,
Dies for England all her days !

Thou

'Tis thine to give,
And thine to scorn ;
So shalt thou live
And reign and mourn.

When all is done
Fate worketh thee no ill,
Leaving thee still
Thy skill,
Thy furious wise will,
And they heart of stone.

THE END

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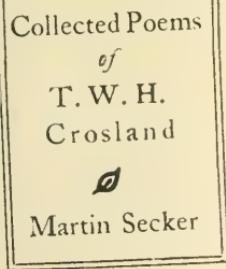
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